Sourwine Retires, But Fight Is On to Save Security Unit

By Stephen Isaacs 1/29/79
Washington Post Staff Writer

An unprecedented mail campaign is under way in an effort to keep the once-powerful Senate Internal Security Subcommittee alive.

The campaign, directed at members of the committee that fixes annual budgets of other committees, comes as the subcommittee's chief counsel, Julien G. (Jay) Sourwine, who played a major role in making the subcommittee one of the most feared Washington institutions, has quietly decided to retire. He will leave the subcommittee Feb. 29.

Last year the Rules Committee slashed the budget request of the subcommittee, Congress' last vestige of its Communist-hunting days, and informed its chairman, powerful James O. Eastland (D-Miss.), that those funds would be its last.

For the last several years Sen. Mark O. Hatfield (R-Ore.) has pleaded with his fellow Rules Committee members to eliminate the subcommittee on the grounds it has spent huge amounts of the taxpayers' money and produced all but nothing.

In their heyday two decades ago, Sourwine and the subcommittee shared the Washington spotlight with Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy (R-Wis.) and the House Un-American Activities Committee.

McCarthy and HUAC are deceased, and conservatives across the land have mobilized in a last-ditch campaign to save the Internal Security Subcommittee.

Hatfield's office received more than 200 letters on the subject Monday; the total number of letters his office has recieved on the subject is in the thousands.

See SOURWINE, A6, Col. 4

Senators Urged To Retain Panel

SOURWINE, From A1

Letters urging a vote in behalf of the subcommittee constituted almost all the mail received in the office of Rules Committee member Dick Clark (D-Iowa) this week.

Sen. Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.), who voted last year to abolish the subcommittee this year, has "gotten a huge amount of mail" on it, said an aide, Thomas Hughes.

"An amazing amount of it has had extraneous little gummed . labels and slogans on the envelope, like 'Don't give away the Panama Canal, give away Henry Kissinger instead,'" Hughes said.

Sen. Harrison A. Williams Jr. (D-N.J.) also voted no last year and says he is inclined to do the same this year.

Last year Sourwine made an urgent plea to the senators to spare the subcommittee, warning of dangers to America's security that need watching.

Sourwine said he had nothing to do with the letter-writing campaign, saying, "I would myself consider it improper for any member of the staff to implement or augment pressure on any member of the Senate."